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## AHEC and HOSA: Working Together to Promote Career Opportunities in Health Care

Patricia Hodgins, MS, RN, NYS AHEC System  
Advisory Board Member and Supervisor  
Career and Technical Education Team  
New York State Education Department

The New York State Association of Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) wishes to thank the NYS AHEC System for allowing HOSA to be included in some of the local AHEC initiatives. HOSA is a career and technical education student leadership organization whose mission is to promote career opportunities in health care and to enhance the delivery of quality health care to all people. At the national level, HOSA is endorsed by the U. S. Department of Education and at the State level is chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. HOSA provides a unique program of leadership development, motivation, and recognition exclusively for secondary, postsecondary, adult, and collegiate students enrolled in health occupations education programs. HOSA is 100% health care! Since its inception in 1976, HOSA has grown steadily nationally having membership from 36 affiliated state associations with over 70,000 student/teacher members. There are currently approximately 500 members of New York State HOSA.

HOSA is not a club that a few students in school join. Rather, HOSA is a powerful instructional tool that works best when it is integrated into the health occupations education curriculum and classroom. Health occupations education teachers are committed to the development of the total person. They recognize the importance of providing students with training far beyond the basic technical skills needed for entry into the health care field. The rapidly changing



*HOSA presented a plaque to Terry Gefell, MEd, CHES, CNYAHEC Director of Development and Communications, for CNYAHEC's continued support of HOSA activities.*

health care system needs dedicated workers who, in addition to their technical skills, are people-oriented and capable of playing a leadership or follower role as a member of a health care team. HOSA's mission is especially critical when considering the acute shortage of qualified workers for the health care industry.

The Central New York AHEC and Joanne Borfitz have been extremely helpful to the New York State HOSA organization at its annual statewide competitive events conferences that have been held in Syracuse for the past few years. Joanne has provided support for awards and judges' expenses and she and her staff have graciously volunteered to serve as judges for several of the competitive events. Her work with middle school and high school teachers has been extremely positive!

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# Cogitations from the Director

**Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD**  
NYS AHEC System Director

When asked the secret of his success, Charles Dickens responded, "Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with my heart to do well." In this issue of AHEC Update, you will read about several collaborations, one between the Health Occupations Educators Association and the New York State AHEC System, another between the Northern AHEC and North Country institutions, and another led by Dr. Neil Calman, New York State AHEC System New York Metropolitan Region Office Medical Director, that engages health professionals and

policy makers to improve the health care system. These collaborations are working because the community leaders and our AHEC centers are putting their hearts into doing well. If you have accomplished something, and you are good at it, and AHEC can do anything to make your success more successful, then we want to give you all we've got. In fact, we become renewed with each partnership that develops.



*Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD, Director, New York State AHEC System*

## Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC Successfully Conducts Its Inaugural Internship Program

The Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC (MSI AHEC) just celebrated the pioneering group of 29 summer interns in the six-week Summer Health Internship Program (SHIP). As a result of creative collaborations and relationship building with community-based health care providers, interns were placed at a variety of locations throughout the two boroughs. The sites included the Harlem Hospital Center, the American Cancer Society in Harlem, Staten Island University Hospital, Mount Hope Family Practice, and Bellevue Hospital Center. Exposure to health professions was the goal, and based on observation and feedback, the MSI AHEC far exceeded this goal for the first time out. At the health facilities, students were able to learn about many ways to be part of the health care profession. Departments students participated in included pediatrics/in-patient, obstetrics, newborn nursery, ob/gyn ultrasound, audiology, rehabilitation therapy, subspecialty clinics, employee health services, medical records, women's health center, smoking cessation program, and community health education.

**Mary Mitchell, MPA**  
MSI AHEC Director

For many students, the program allowed a first glimpse of what it actually means to work in the health field. In their own words "Thank you for providing me with such a great opportunity," "Thanks for an incredible experience," and "Thank you for...being able to open my eyes to the world of medicine."



*Mary Mitchell, MPA, Manhattan-Staten Island AHEC Director, with Elisha Medina, nominated by her peers as most supportive to program, and her site preceptor Karima Pace, of the American Cancer Society Harlem Office.*

# Strategies for Our Future

**Mary J. Sienkiewicz, MBA**  
New York State AHEC System Deputy Director

In summer of 2000, the newly developing New York State AHEC System, comprised of two centers, convened its first strategic planning retreat with nine participants. Four years later, in the summer of 2004, at full capacity with nine centers, the New York State AHEC System continued its strategic planning process with a May 17 retreat in Buffalo that involved 29 individuals. Participants included center directors, associate directors and members of their boards of directors together with regional office directors, medical directors and Statewide Office staff.

The retreat focused on 1) developing key elements of a strategic plan for 2005-2008, 2) discussion of structure, (roles, responsibilities and communications), lessons learned and plans for the future and 3) goals, strategies and factors critical to sustainability.

Wayne K. Anderson, PhD, Dean, School of Pharmacy, University at Buffalo, who is also a member of the New York State AHEC System Advisory Board and Chair, Erie-Niagara AHEC Board of Directors, facilitated the retreat. Dr. Anderson's familiarity with and interest in the capacity of the NYS AHEC System to address health care issues through health workforce development strategies contributed greatly to the strategic planning process.



*Wayne K. Anderson, PhD, Dean, School of Pharmacy, University at Buffalo, facilitating the NYS AHEC System Strategic Planning Retreat.*

# Engaging Health Professionals and Policy Makers to Improve Health Care Delivery for Communities in Need

**Kenya Johari Lucas, MA, New York Metropolitan Region Office Research Assistant**

Dr. Neil Calman recently represented the New York State AHEC System Metropolitan Region Office in a series of events to proactively engage fellow health professionals and policy makers in improving the quality of the health care system according to the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

## **April 29th, NIH Director's Council on Public Representatives**

This presentation, "From Research to Social Action: Engaging the Public's Trust through a Sustained Partnership Committed to Solving the Problems We Study," challenged both health researchers and practitioners to take a community participatory approach to their work as a way of both demonstrating concern for their health and health care and improving overall quality of the system.

The talk used Bronx Health REACH, an Institute for Urban Family Health led coalition engaged in a long-term community intervention with a sophisticated evaluation component, as exemplar. Through nearly five years of partnership with the southwest Bronx, Bronx Health REACH has identified and addressed root causes of health disparities, and has promoted changes in law and regulation that are required to eliminate disparities in health outcomes. From this discussion, four key implications were outlined for NIH in its charge to move from funding research within communities to fostering lasting and trusted partnerships with the community. These included requiring researchers to develop long-term relationships with community-based organizations and to commit to helping solve the problems they uncover.

## **June 9th, Clinical Directors Network Webcast**

In a webcast to a national audience of health providers "An Overview of Health Disparities in Bronx, NY" was presented under sponsorship of the Clinical Directors Network and the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Bureau of Primary Health Care. This training was designed to educate providers about the pervasiveness of racial and ethnic health disparities, and steps that can be taken to eliminate such inequity.



*Neil Calman, MD,  
NYS AHEC System  
Metropolitan  
Region Office  
Medical Director*

## **Minorities lag behind whites in the United States on nearly every health measure, from life expectancy and disease rates to health insurance and access to care**

An opening quotation from a recent Associated Press release stated, "Minorities lag behind whites in the United States on nearly every health measure, from life expectancy and disease rates to health insurance and access to care, said a report (from the Commonwealth Fund) documenting the widespread disparities." Dr. Calman went on to describe disparities in diabetes rates among communities of color, as well as similar disparities in diabetes complications, such as kidney disease, eye disease, and mortality.

The presentation concluded with the Bronx Health REACH Coalition's seven-point plan to eliminate all health disparities: ending the segregation that

still exists in health care facilities more than 40 years after the Civil Rights Act; working to create a more representative health care workforce; standing up for insurance coverage for all; making it possible for everyone to get culturally competent care; ensuring that public money is invested in public health education; ensuring that uncompensated care funds meet their intended use; and recognizing and ending environmental racism and the toll it takes on communities of color. The webcast has been archived on the internet and will reach an ever growing audience. It can be viewed at <http://www.cdnetwork.org>.

## **June 16th, Region II Community Health Center Conference**

As a growing concern for major stakeholders, quality improvement is the central stage upon which the politics of health care are played out. How, for example, can quality improvement be used to close the disparities gap? Further, how can electronic health information systems result in more efficient and effective care?

These very issues were addressed in this presentation on the role of electronic medical records in primary care delivery. As President of New York's first freestanding community health center to implement an electronic medical record (EMR) system, Dr. Calman shared seven steps to success with EMRs that centered on organizational readiness, system selection, site visits, economic feasibility, contracting, implementation models, and system outputs.

Engaging in discourse with those who create and influence health care policy and practice, the New York State AHEC System Metropolitan Region Office is dedicated to developing creative strategies for an improved, culturally responsive health care system.

# BQLI AHEC Expands Summer Internship Program to Long Island

July marked the start of the third annual BQLI AHEC Summer Health Internship Program (SHIP). This year featured some important changes in the program, including expansion to Long Island. Ninety-three (93) students were given the opportunity to gain experience in 13 preceptor sites throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk counties.

The Long Island portion of the program was an important collaboration between BQLI AHEC, the African-American Health Education and Development Foundation (AHEAD), and the Nassau County Department of Health. Nassau County has been working to address the

**Michael Kantrowitz**  
BQLI AHEC Student Intern

disparities in health care that currently exist in the county. The project was an important part of their initiative.

The enrollment of 43 students from Long Island indicated a strong interest among students from the area. Working with local hospitals, Nassau University Medical Center, North Shore-Long Island Jewish Medical System, South Nassau Communities Hospital, and Winthrop University Hospital, the students were exposed to many different departments throughout the facilities.

Once each week during the six-week program, the students would come

together at Winthrop University Hospital for a didactic session. The County Executive for Nassau, Thomas R. Suozzi, opened the first session with personal remarks. In Brooklyn, students also met weekly at the Brooklyn campus of Long Island University.

The didactic sessions drew notable speakers who discussed a wide range of careers and health issues including nursing, dentistry, occupation therapy, public health, cancer detection, sexually transmitted diseases, and mental illness. Among the speakers were Dr. Barbara Ross-Lee, Dean of the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine, Dr. Brian  
*Continued on page 7*



*Thomas R. Suozzi (third from left) with administrators from BQLI AHEC, AHEAD, and the Nassau County Department of Health before the opening Long Island didactic session for SHIP 2004.*



*Brooklyn and Queens students wearing scrubs during a didactic session.*

## Erie Niagara AHEC Sponsors a Health Careers Summer Academy at the University at Buffalo

The Health Careers Summer Academy at The University of Buffalo was a success! Fifty-three (53) students from Erie, Niagara, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Genesee, Livingston, Steuben, Orleans and Wyoming counties participated in Erie Niagara AHEC's first Health Careers Summer Academy. The students participated in well-orchestrated and planned programs at various health professional schools at the University. Participants exhibited tremendous poise and were well mannered as they roomed in University dorms for a week and

**Paul A. Saunders**  
Erie Niagara AHEC Program Coordinator

participated in various lectures and hands-on activities. The students left the academy very pleased and excited about health careers, with more knowledge about the health care profession than they had before they arrived. Many of them expressed interest in specific programs and higher education for health careers. Overall, the program was an asset to students who may have never had the opportunity to explore career options in the manner the academy provided.

The goal of the academy was to increase awareness of underrepresented and underserved community populations to career options in the health care profession; the Academy met its goal. One of the highlights of the Academy was the School of Dental Medicine, where students practiced fixing a cavity, placing amalgam into models, and learned various terminologies. At the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, students saw a cadaver and witnessed first hand what it is like to dissect the human body. Eighty-two

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# Northern AHEC and Iroquois Healthcare Association: A Successful Partnership

**Richard K. Merchant, MA**  
NAHEC Executive Director

In the summer of 2003, the Northern Area Health Education Center (NAHEC), Potsdam, New York, and the Iroquois Healthcare Association (IHA), Clifton Park, New York, formalized a partnership founded on parallel missions. The two organizations teamed up to provide program access involving healthcare career information and awareness to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) eligible youth in northern New York.

The partnership has provided an opportunity for more than 65 local youth to actively and experientially learn more about healthcare careers through the engagement of a series of activities and events, including: the NAHEC My Health Career exploration website, the My Health Career Student Handbook, infection control training, job skills training, placement as a Job Shadow, six-week placement in a local health facility as a paid Health Scholar, and the capstone Achievement Workshop.

Informal discussion and formal evaluation of students involved in the program indicate a substantial increase



*Michelle Burnett observes dental procedures at the office of Carl Scruggs, DDS in Massena, NY.*

in both healthcare career knowledge and job skill attainment. Moreover, evaluations conducted at the hosting healthcare facilities yielded exceptionally favorable feedback from the health professionals supervising the students as Job Shadows and Health Scholars. Overall, the NAHEC-IHA partnership has connected potential employees with potential employers, giving both a clear sense of awareness and understanding of each other's presence and offerings.

Michelle Burnett, a recent high school graduate from Massena Central High School, has been exploring the career of dental hygiene through the program. Michelle has been placed as a Job Shadow and a Health Scholar at two separate dental offices in her community to learn more about the dental hygiene profession and the dental office work environment. Through her experience, Michelle was trained in instrument sterilization, x-ray film developing and dental assisting as well as dental anatomy. Michelle has applied for the Fall 2005 Dental Hygiene program at Monroe Community College. She plans on returning to her hometown to practice once she completes the dental hygiene program.

Michelle represents one of many of the successful outcomes of the NAHEC – IHA partnership program. NAHEC and IHA both have missions emphasizing healthcare workforce development. Working alone, it is likely that neither organization would have netted such successful outcomes with this population. However, working together, the outcomes illustrate the multiple levels of benefit obtained through collaboration and partnership.

*Continued from page 4*

percent (82%) of the students said the program met their personal goals while 98% said they enjoyed the experience. Erie Niagara AHEC would like to thank the Western New York Rural AHEC and the University at Buffalo Schools of Nursing, Dental Medicine, Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Public Health and Health Professions, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Social Work for the work, dedication and energy they gave to make this Academy a reality to well deserving students. We hope that we will have the opportunity to offer these programs to students from underserved populations again next year.



*Student Zachary Woodward works with an ultrasound instrument at the School of Health Care and Health Professions during the Erie Niagara AHEC/UB Health Careers Summer Academy.*



*Students practice Vital Signs on a manikin in a standard patient room at the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences during the Erie Niagara AHEC/UB Health Careers Summer Academy.*

# CNYAHEC and SUNY Upstate Host MedQuest 2004

Jennifer Tufano  
CNYAHEC Program Coordinator

Twenty (20) high school students from Central New York hiked up and down the hills of SUNY Upstate Medical University campus in Syracuse learning more about health professions and college life. For the second year, CNYAHEC sponsored MedQuest – a summer resident camp for students in grades 10 and 11.

Selected students spent five days living in a college residence hall, touring health care facilities, and getting hands-on experiences in various health care fields. The goal of MedQuest is to introduce health careers to young adults through fun, interactive workshops, and to get a feel for college life from both a campus and classroom perspective.

SUNY Upstate Medical University was a great pick for MedQuest with its diverse offerings in its schools of medicine, nursing, health professions and graduate studies. Students from seven of CNYAHEC's 14 counties attended camp this year. Many attended MASH (Medical Academy of Science

and Health) camp in previous years, another of CNYAHEC's pipeline programs for youth.

Students stitched pigs' feet, put casts on one another's arms and legs, became certified in CPR and AED, visited the gross anatomy lab, made radiation masks, learned trauma support techniques, and more. Each student also had a one-on-one job shadowing experience with a health professional. The culmination of this week-long adventure solidified many students' interests in pursuing a health career in the future.

When asked about her experience, Erica Hillenbrand, a student from Pulaski, stated, "I learned there are more than just a few people involved in the recovery of a person - there are a lot of people involved. Everyone in health care has a unique job that really matters. I have learned what I need to do in order to make my dream job come true."

The event involved the cooperation of individuals from SUNY Upstate and CNYAHEC. Many health professionals made a commitment to assure the



*Health professionals from SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse teach CNYAHEC's MedQuest students the basics of casting.*

success of MedQuest. James Vossler, Assistant Dean for the College of Health Professions, coordinated the campus activities. "This experience, one that offers young people an early awareness of health careers, can make a world of difference in their future and can provide a small step to helping meet the shortage of health professionals," states Vossler.

Because of the overwhelming interest in MedQuest (this year, there were over 70 applications for 20 slots), CNYAHEC plans to offer two camps in 2005.

## WNY R-AHEC Receives Award for Pipeline Programming

At the 24th Annual Meeting of the Wyoming County Business Education Council (BEC), the Western New York Rural AHEC (R-AHEC) received an award recognizing pipeline activities promoting health careers in Wyoming County. Sharon Grugel, Executive Director of the BEC, discussed the AHEC/BEC collaboration in the county. The two organizations work together, each drawing on the expertise and strengths of the other.

The meeting program included three of the R-AHEC aka Science students answering questions for the audience about what they liked and learned while participating in the aka Science program. Their enthusiasm served as a testimonial to the program.

Jane Munro, MS HCM  
R-AHEC Center Director

R-AHEC programming in Wyoming County has been almost entirely funded through a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. The foundation award has allowed for piloting of many initiatives, and helped R-AHEC learn through the BEC how to navigate the challenges of offering programming within schools. Business Education Councils and Alliances, where they exist, are wonderful partners in furthering pipeline programs. We would strongly encourage other AHECs and organizations to seek out the BECs/BEAs and see what united, coordinated program offerings can be developed.



*Congressman Tom Reynolds, keynote speaker at the 24th Annual Meeting of the Wyoming County Business Education Council, poses with R-AHEC aka Science (all kids are Scientists) students from Wyoming Central School.*

# Hudson-Mohawk AHEC Summer Scholar Shares Experience

Ryan Callery, H-M AHEC Summer Scholar

*Ryan Callery is one of 10 Summer Scholars supported by the Hudson-Mohawk AHEC during July and August. He is an 11th grade student at Johnstown High School and is hosted as an employee at Community Health Center, a certified home health care agency serving Fulton and Montgomery counties. Hudson-Mohawk AHEC funds Ryan's salary for this summer "employment."*

*Applicants to the Hudson-Mohawk AHEC Summer Scholars program are recommended by their faculty and/or guidance counselors. Each student submits an application and essay that describes their experience with health care and interest in pursuing a health career. Ryan is taking advanced biology courses and plans to become a medical doctor.*

Most high school students did not receive the opportunity that I experienced this summer at Community Health Center. Before my Summer Scholar internship, I had no idea what a community health center was and what services they have to offer. Surprisingly, the center offers numerous services to the people of Fulton and Montgomery counties, including nurses, physical, occupational, and speech therapists, home health aides, social workers, nutrition counselors and more.

I was fortunate to travel with these health care professionals and witness what services they provide and how those services impact a patient's life.

*BQLI AHEC continued from page 4*  
Harper, Suffolk County Health Commissioner, Dr. David Ackman, Nassau County Commissioner of Health, and Dr. Scott Rankin, Nassau County Deputy Commissioner of Health and BQLI AHEC Board of Directors member.

All of the students in Brooklyn and many on Long Island also received instruction and certification in CPR. Students were able to test the knowledge

What I found most interesting about my summer experience was the way in which the patient received his or her health care. The health care providers travel to the home of the patient and provide health care to the homebound.

The experience that I had at Community Health Center was much more rewarding than that of a hospital placement because I witnessed various health care professionals perform services in a way that I would not be able to observe elsewhere. Home care especially takes caring individuals to make a person be able to stay at home comfortably and receive care.

When comparing my Summer Scholar experience to other summer jobs, I obtained a wealth of knowledge about health care, which I would have never been able to attain in another position. The Summer Scholar program was a real eye opener to health care, showing me every aspect. I currently know of many diverse careers in health care that I never knew existed.

I would like to thank those who made my Summer Scholar experience a rewarding summer enrichment, and to those at Community Health Center in Johnstown who bring truth to the phrase, "home care is where the heart is."

they had acquired from the speakers and their experiences by participating in a "Medical Jeopardy" game in which they were eligible to win prizes.

Closing ceremonies in Nassau and Brooklyn were held on August 11 and August 18 to celebrate the completion of the program and thank the many Board of Directors members, administrators, and preceptors who helped make the program a success.



Ryan Callery,  
H-M AHEC  
Summer Scholar

# A Bronx-Westchester AHEC Story

Timothy Morales, BWAHEC Project Assistant

I was introduced to the Bronx-Westchester AHEC Internship Program after my freshman year at Penn State University in the summer of 2003. Thus far my experience with the organization has been very positive and beneficial in respect to my career goals, as well as personal enhancement. With only a year of college education, BWAHEC gave me the chance to participate in their internship program and, in addition, they made special accommodations for me to intern at a public relations/marketing firm, specializing in health, named Arcos Communications.

I kept in contact with my supervisor from Arcos and she was able to offer me a temporary full-time position for the full period of my winter break from college. This time around, I was given more responsibility with less supervision because the owner felt that I had made significant progress and that I was capable of being productive on my own.

BWAHEC was able to offer me a full-time position in the main office this summer. In this position, I was able to work directly with the students in the summer internship program, as well as their supervisors, on a regular basis. This was an enjoyable and beneficial experience because I was able to relate to the students since I had participated in the program the previous year and I was also able to network with many professionals from different companies. The work environment was pleasant and the staff was very supportive and encouraging. This experience was better than I had expected and I absolutely appreciate the efforts that BWAHEC has made on my behalf.



Timothy Morales,  
BWAHEC Project  
Assistant

*AHEC & HOSA continued from page 1*

The Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island AHEC has reached out to William H. Maxwell High School in Brooklyn to provide internships for some students enrolled in the health occupations education program. They have also been very generous in sponsoring 10 students to participate in the New York State HOSA conference in Syracuse.

HOSA would like to say a big thank you to all of the other AHEC offices

that have supported the health occupations programs in their local area and statewide in the form of grants, judging competitive events, and working with teachers and students at all levels!

If you would like more information about HOSA and the health occupations programs in your local area, please contact Patricia Hodgins at the New York State Education Department at 518 486-1547 or Phodgins@mail.nysed.gov.



*BQLI AHEC representatives went to William H. Maxwell High School to interview students for summer internships and to learn more about HOSA.*

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